



The SQP Process

SAGTA - The NQMS Workshop

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Introduction

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Content

1. Introductory comments on SQP and competence
2. The SiLC proposal
3. Criteria of competence and Code of Practice
4. Assessment process
5. Additions required to meet SQP criteria and
6. Conversion of registered SiLCs to SQPs
7. Summary



The SQP and Competence

NPPF

Para 121. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that; Adequate site investigation information prepared by competent person presented.

***Glossary.** Competent person (to prepare site investigation information) - person with recognised relevant qualification, sufficient experience in dealing with type(s) of pollution or land instability and membership of relevant professional organisation.*

No reference to competence in supplementary guidance

Part 2A Statutory Guidance

***Para 3.18-3.20.** Using external expertise during risk assessment*

When choosing specialist consultants, local authorities should strive as far as possible to ensure they are appropriately qualified and competent to undertake the work.



The SQP and Competence

Report of Urban Task Force : “Towards an urban renaissance”. Identified need for “accredited specialists” to “provide reassurance that reports on land condition provide reliable information about a site.

SiLC scheme launched in 1999

Provides recognition of competence & skills of those working in land condition sector

Registered SiLC is

Senior practitioner;

- with broad awareness, knowledge and understanding of land condition issues
- provides impartial and professional advice in their field of expertise.

SiLC Register. Run & administered by Professional and Technical Panel (PTP) - representatives from all supporting professional bodies.



The SQP and Competence

Supporting professional bodies

AGS The Association of Geoenvironmental and Geotechnical Specialists

CIWEM Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management

ICE Institution of Civil Engineers

CIEH Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

IEMA Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment

RICS Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

RSC Royal Society of Chemistry

REHIS Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland

GS Geological Society



The SQP and Competence

What constitutes a SiLC / **SQP**

Someone with:

- a land condition specialism
- understanding of the land assessment process
- sufficient years relevant experience to develop competence
- ability to undertake or oversee land condition-related work
- Chartered and a professional approach (Code of Practice).

[Note: Chartership from supporting professional bodies and other relevant institutions]





The SQP and Competence

What constitutes a SiLC / SQP

- A senior individual – not a company
- has a high level of specific competency
 - can delegate collation and assembly of information
 - cannot delegate responsibility for quality
- Skilled in interpretation, etc.
- Not an expert/ specialist in all fields of land condition
- Able to identify gaps in data
- Knows when to seek assistance.





Land Forum NQMS and the SQP – SiLC Proposal

Land Forum has developed proposals for NQMS

Voluntary scheme – can bring real value to projects

Not threat to LA jobs

The NQMS will assist CLOs by;

- reducing number of poor submissions,
- helping review process by improvements in quality and consistency
- enabling focus on high risk sites or inadequate proposals



Land Forum NQMS and the SQP – SiLC Proposal

SiLC supports NQMS

- great opportunity to improve standards
- expand role of SiLCs to benefit of client developers and regulators

Key element of NQMS is competence of
Suitably Qualified Person (SQP)

SiLC offer to provide the assessment process.

- Based upon existing and well established process
- Modified / extended to meet additional competencies
- Supported by existing disciplinary and complaints procedure



Criteria of competence

1. Demonstrate thorough knowledge of their particular area of expertise
2. Demonstrate awareness and some understanding of other relevant fields and professions
3. Demonstrate objective judgement in information & data management
4. Communicate well and manage effective interaction
5. Show familiarity, understanding & ability to assess and summarise complex data
6. **Demonstrate thorough understanding of NQMS and responsibilities of SQP**
7. Know and demonstrate willingness to comply with Code of Practice



Code of Practice

Designed to ensure commitments of individuals to aims & objectives:

- Continually improve competence of land condition practitioners
- Establish, enhance & uphold professions reputation.
 1. Uphold and promote the integrity of profession.
 2. Exercise honesty, diligence & impartiality in professional work.
 3. Seek to understand and comply with legislation & standards
 4. Not allow conflicts of interest to influence decisions/judgement, to make parties aware
 5. Not accept anything of value that may influence professional judgement.
 6. Continually work to maintain & improve knowledge; give reasonable assistance to candidates entering the profession.



Code of Practice

7. Maintain/ enhance proficiency, individually & throughout profession.
8. In giving advice, make relevant persons aware of potential consequences & alternatives.
9. Acknowledge limitations of competence and not undertake any work beyond professional capability.
10. Ensure all information in data assessments (reports) is, to the best of their knowledge, correct & accurate.
11. Not endorse any information or deductions from clients or third parties that they cannot verify as accurate & true.
12. **Keep up to date with NQMS & comply with requirements when acting as SQP. Provide all information to auditor on request**
13. Endeavour to uphold and enhance the reputation of the register.



Current assessment process

Assessment occurs twice yearly

Comprises three elements;

1. Application. Demonstrate candidate meets basic requirements (qualifications, chartership, experience). Two references
2. Written examination (open book). Includes individual written submission.

Supported by; Candidate application form; candidate application guidelines; CPD guide; Examples of exam topics; Assessor guide; Introduction Day.

3. Peer interview

Supported by; Appeal procedure.

www.silc.org.uk



Application

Applicants submit application to the secretariat detailing:

- academic qualifications and training
- sufficient years suitable experience to develop competence
- professional body membership
- project log sheets
- references (sealed).



Individual written submission

Demonstrate

- SiLC criteria
- SiLC Code of Practice
- own experience
- broader knowledge and understanding.

Contents

- Max. 1500 words
- Breadth and depth of knowledge
- Experience
- Compliance with Code of Practice



The open-book exam

Three questions (developed by SiLC PTP)

Overall objective

Determine candidate's ability to understand, research & communicate information on technical, practical & policy issues re land affected by contamination

- Question 1 – completion of a data assessment and summary of existing reports/ information [3 or 4 extracts of disparate sources / various ages]
 - using proprietary, company or LCR formats
 - Test ability to summarise data accurately and concisely
- Questions 2 and 3
 - Tests broader understanding, extent of knowledge, understanding of risk-management and regulatory processes
 - Tests ability to write with fluidity and accuracy.



The open-book exam

Questions 2 and 3

Aspects of land affected by contamination tested comprise;

- Policy (and emerging policy)
- Relevant law and regulation
- Third party review
- Management and procedures
- Under planning
- Related to Part 2A
- Particular technical aspects
(e.g. waste, risk assessment, risk perception and communication or some unusual feature of site in Q1 e.g. radioactivity, invasive weeds, UXO etc.)



The open-book exam

Questions 2 and 3

Candidates;

1. tested on ability to assess third party reports in context of Part 2A and planning regimes
2. expected to respond to questions posed on behalf of either; developer or regulator (local authority or Environment Agency)
3. required to demonstrate ability to understand how third party reports address either tests set out in; statutory Guidance and/or standard planning conditions;
 - Desk based preliminary risk assessment
 - Site investigation
 - Remediation strategy
 - Verification



The open-book exam

Setting the exam (and answer guidelines)

Assessors setting the exam ensure;

1. Question is clear and unambiguous
2. Question is capable of being answered within the word limit
3. Answer guidelines not restrictive but appropriately flexible to enable a good answer to obtain an appropriate score

Draft exam paper reviewed by SiLC assessor with appropriate academic background and experience in setting and marking exam papers to ensure these criteria are met.

Answer guidelines also subject to this review to ensure they are fair, balanced and relevant to questions posed



The open-book exam

Marking the exam

Exam papers marked anonymously by two assessors independently and results submitted to secretariat.

Marking carried out in accordance with Guidelines for assessors [11 pages of guidance + 5 supporting appendices]

Competent response to each question set at 60% (sliding scale).

Defined as

“Work is satisfactory and accurate with few errors or omissions, and is of a standard that it demonstrates an ability to perform the sort of tasks appropriate to a registered SiLC, and to a standard of competence such that a client could reasonably expect to rely on”.

Candidates who pass exam, or if failure is borderline (defined), called for peer interview



Peer interview

60-minute face-to-face interview

- 2 assessors plus observer
- Recorded

Peer review seeks to evaluate three main issues

1. Queries raised in written submission or exam answers about the candidate's technical competence, understanding of the regulatory regime or up to date knowledge
2. Candidate's understanding of Code of Practice and commitment to complying with it.
3. Candidate's ability to communicate verbally in an interview environment [i.e. in addition to written communications].



Peer interview

- Two Assessors complete assessment marking sheets (Appendix 5 to Assessor Guidelines]
- Candidates can only be failed on SiLC criteria or Code of Practice
- The two Assessors will interview the candidate whose paper they marked (Silent Observer there to help re any uncertainty)
- Assessors provide comment and recommendations on the basis of the written submission, the exam and the interview
- Agreed assessment marking sheet signed by both assessors and sent to secretariat (with recorded interview).
- Recommendations from all assessors sent to SiLC PTP for ratification
- After ratification candidates notified by secretariat.



Conversion module for SiLC to SQP

SiLC criteria cover all the generic competencies required of a SQP

Conversion module developed to cover additional requirements of SQP

All currently registered SiLCs able to apply for conversion.

Additional elements of Competence Criteria and Code of Practice

6. Demonstrate thorough understanding of NQMS and responsibilities of SQP
12. Keep up to date with NQMS & comply with requirements when acting as SQP. Provide all information to auditor on request

From 2016b exam additional elements incorporated into exam.

Successful candidates automatically able to register as SQP if they wish.



Conversion module for SiLC to SQP

Objectives of NQMS

- To provide assurance to developers (who retain the legal responsibility for adequately dealing with land contamination problems) and to Regulator(s) that the risks arising from land contamination have been adequately assessed and dealt with by competent people.
- To improve the quality of reports delivered by the contaminated land industry to a level whereby Developers and Regulator(s) can better rely upon the conclusions put forward without the need for further scrutiny or auditing.



Conversion module for SiLC to SQP

Key Features

- Reports prepared in accordance with good (best) practice
- Work properly planned and executed
- Standards and Quality of data collection
- Data Processing
- Report conclusions and Recommendations are substantiated by data and analysis
- Any limitations clearly identified
- All regulatory requirements met (including environmental permitting)



Conversion module for SiLC to SQP

Requirements of SQP

- Who can be an SQP
- Responsibilities
 - Assess Capability / Competence of Team Members (Skills Development Framework)
 - Ensure reports are properly checked / reviewed / audited by themselves and key specialist items signed off by appropriate specialist
 - Ensure conclusions and recommendations are 'reasonable' and any limitations properly identified
 - Sign Declaration form
- Acceptable Standards
 - Already covered by existing SiLC criteria



Conversion module for SiLC to SQP

Key Aspects to be Checked

Reports

- Desk Studies
- Phase 2 site investigation reports (inc risk assessment)
- Remediation Plans
- Verification reports

Declaration Form

Complaints and Audit process

Post Module Assessment

Post module evaluation test. Tests individually marked by SiLC assessors.



Summary

1. Need and support for NQMS
2. Competence – key element
3. SiLC established process for assessment of competence supported by all relevant professional institutions
4. Additions needed to Criteria and Code of Conduct and modification / re-emphasis in examination process
5. Conversion for existing SiLCs
6. SiLC offer to provide the assessment process.
 - Based upon existing and well established process
 - Modified / extended to meet additional competencies
 - Supported by existing disciplinary procedure
7. Great opportunity for improving standards in our industry to benefit of clients/ developers and regulators.



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